

August 28th, 2023

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in response to an urgent need to add information and context to the situation that has developed most drastically over the last year in regards to the incident between Marian Beck and the seaplane taxiing out of the Narrows in August of last year, 2022.

I myself was present the day it occurred, and watched the incident happen partially, for I was at the helm of the Stormbird as it exited the channel on its usual route for delivering and fetching mail for the residents of Halibut Cove. This, along with ferry service of the Danny J, is consistent all summer long at the hour of 10 am in the mornings of Tuesday and Saturday, June through early September. Our other times of operation are 1 PM, 4PM, 6PM and 9 PM, for most years every single day and now five days a week. It has been this way for all the years I have participated and been an employee of the Kachemak Bay Ferry (18 years this year), and for a time as an employee of The Narrows Company in the early 2000s. I have been an active mariner operating commercial vessels in the Narrows of Halibut Cove and on Kachemak Bay for over 20 years.

While I remained focused on my job as helmsman of the Stormbird, I did not watch the incident in its entirety. I did see partial moments as Marian in her boat swung by the Stormbird and eventually joined us on our port side as we piloted out of the channel. We then watched the plane proceed behind us about its route and take off seemingly unhindered, to its next destination. As the tides in Kachemak Bay are on the extreme side, we lose a lot of water between high and low tide, and the tide was only a few hours past low, leaving us with less room than usual to maneuver out of the channel. This, added to the issue of navigating alongside a seaplane taxiing out, was a less than ideal situation. The Stormbird and Danny J are also both single screw vessels, which further reduces their ability to navigate in restricted channels. Tuesday is also a day when both of these vessels depart their respective docks at 10am. For a Seaplane to decide to depart at this particular time was, shall we say, very bad timing, and could have been avoided easily on the part of the seaplane pilot.

I myself, most usually, am the primary captain of the Danny J ferry, and have been with the Kachemak Bay Ferry for 18 years as I have mentioned above. In this time, I have had the opportunity to know Marian as both a person, a leader, and a member of my family all of my life. She has been a major figure in our lives as children of Halibut Cove, which has given me many contexts in which to know and observe her through the years. I have never in all my life seen Marian cut corners on safety, endanger a single person knowingly, or be anything less than a hospitable and loyal member of the community. While she has welcomed us all to enjoy The Saltry all these years and offered it as a community place of

gathering, she also has an impeccable sense of pride about her work, her life as a marine operator and pilot boat operator, and the life that Halibut Cove has given her. She has given more to this community through her contributions than almost anyone here, and has served not only as an animal doctor and rehabilitator, but also as an emergency medivac to Homer at all hours of the day and year. She cares about the people who live here, who are her lifelong friends, neighbors and relatives.

Alongside this great care, Marian has seen a large share of tragedy and strife, surrounding not only plane accidents in Halibut Cove and personal losses related to planes, but also devastating fires, horrible accidents and losses of life that she personally had to respond to. I have seen her develop serious anxieties over frightening incidents that have personally impacted her wellbeing, family and property. She can see the world as larger than life, looming and terrifying, especially when listening to the shocking close calls many of our residents have endured with seaplanes in Halibut Cove. I myself can be included in that statement - while running the Danny J last summer 2022, I had several encounters with planes that prompted me to contact the managers at Stillpoint to report what I saw to be reckless activity during my regularly scheduled commercial ferry traffic. All of these accounts being shared with her personally can only have fueled these fears and anxieties. She felt pushed to further act, in accordance with her growing internal reality of impending disasters fueled by the increasing proximity of planes and boats within the Narrows. I myself do not in any way disagree with that sentiment, for I also felt that it was only a matter of time before a close call became a hit - with myself at the helm, possibly with a boat load of 29 innocent passengers. I made my feelings about this known to anyone who would listen. During the period of time when this was going on, it was an incredibly frustrating feeling, like I was seeing danger at every corner and having NO say in changing the behavior, and my concerns were being brushed aside because it is an inconvenience to the businesses in question. I was worn down by the feeling that any day now could be the moment I had been trying to warn people about.

In this way, I suppose, Marian and myself, and many others, are not that different - accident prevention comes from astute observations and proactive attention to details like these, and from reporting risky behavior. Our worries, however, were not being regarded by the people who had the power to change this activity. Instead, it almost seemed as though in response to our indignation, they actively sought to have more planes coming and going at all hours of the day, regardless of agreements that had been met a few years earlier to avoid the Narrows during certain times of the day.

It has only been in the last seven or eight years that the issue of plane traffic became a common problem and obstacle for our community, and has caused many close calls and accidents within the small confines of our sheltered harbor, along with heated attitudes between the proponents of planes and those who oppose it. Most of us in the community who regularly traverse on water in the Cove have had a near miss or close call with a plane

that left us feeling scared or at the very least deeply uncomfortable about their regular comings and goings. Now it seems that instead of the calm waters of the cove that used to feel safe to float, kayak or row about in, or send our teenagers out in a skiff to begin exploring on their own stead, it has been overtaken by the fear of possible and likely seaplane traffic in and out of the Cove. Their needs have seemingly outweighed the needs of folks who want to feel safe on the water in front of their own houses. Better for business I suppose? Only for their business it would seem. It has not been a welcome change for the residents of Halibut Cove. It is merely for the benefit of ONE singular business, and they have made it known many times that they have no intention of backing off the seaplane traffic.

My personal belief is that Marian has a deep sense of love and protection of the community of Halibut Cove, of keeping it safe for everyone who lives there. For the children in the skiffs who want to venture out on their own, for the visitors who kayak around peacefully appreciating the smallest beauties of coastal Alaska, and for the passengers on the Danny J who ride that boat with joy and expectation for an amazing experience in the home she has worked so hard to build and maintain for everyone to enjoy. It is the reason she built the Saltry and the Danny J - to give back and make something amazing that reflects the values of our home and of our lives together, living quietly alongside nature. She is a loving person who wants us to feel SAFE and PROTECTED, not harassed and afraid. While it was a surprising incident to witness and certainly went past the level that many, including myself, would have deemed necessary, no one was harmed on that day and no property was harmed either - a telling fact that should not go undisputed, though I have been told that is not the case. Not surprising, but I would hope a detail like that would factor heavily in the unjust decision to prosecute her with such severity.

While to some it seemed like a reckless and menacing activity, she was merely someone who felt forced to do SOMETHING. Watching her business and our livelihoods be actively taunted not just that summer but for years, she was pushed to act in the only way she could - to make a statement that reflected the feelings and fears of everyone who felt oppressed by the seeming negligence and rising indifference of the pilots. Pilots who, either knowingly or unknowingly, had been violating a previous agreement made among the community members to limit seaplane traffic in the Narrows, especially during regularly scheduled ferry operations. Operations which have been present for over 40 years, operating in a peaceful and modest fashion, and in large benefit to the community we all enjoy together.

Clearly, this has left a mark on myself and on many other residents in the Cove. I have taken the time to provide screenshots of conversations within our closed Facebook group, which has become our public forum for discussions and reporting of Seaplane mishaps and violations. In this forum, people also openly comment about their fears of tragedy striking our small community, especially children on the water, due to the increase in seaplane traffic. They will be provided alongside this letter.

We have become resigned to the fact that the once calm, peaceful space that the waters of the Cove can offer no longer belong just to things you can see and hear within your own range of senses. Now, we must accept that perhaps a seaplane, landing almost silently and possibly around a corner that leaves no room for mistakes or maneuvering away from said metal-object hurtling in your direction, may come upon us unsuspectingly. This, In spite of the fact that as marine vessels we have the legal right-of-way upon navigable waters.

We are forced to put our trust in pilots who may have not ever landed in our small part of Kachemak Bay, which is heavily trafficked by not only our own boats but by dozens and dozens of private boaters, water taxis and kayakers each day, and that THEY KNOW BETTER THAN US ABOUT WHAT IS SAFE. This is a condescending and arrogant attitude and it is something that I absolutely refuse to stand for.

I hope this narrative has given the context of the situation, as it has many layers of personal emotion, experiences and history. This incident was the culmination of years of frustration, fear, and gaslighting of our community to convince us we are overreacting to the increase in seaplane activity, despite witnessing accidents and close calls, and being told we have no say in preventing a horrific tragedy from transpiring. It has led me to feel deeply mournful for Marian and for what I believe she was trying to accomplish that day - TO BE SEEN AND HEARD ON THIS ISSUE ONCE AND FOR ALL.

My relationship to Marian has changed several times over the years but what I know for sure is everything I have stated about her character above. She is not a criminal or a hazard to society - she is a person who has served her community with loyalty, commitment and above all she aims to protect and defend the right to safe passage and access for the members of this community who have been fighting a long suffering battle with negligent seaplane pilots.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

With deep earnestness,

Elsa Bishop